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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000653

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: KABILA: ELECTIONS PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY, 30 JUNE
WILL BE MANAGED

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

1. (C) Ambassador met privately April 16 with President Kabila, at the President's residence. In the wake of a very positive presentation to the CIAT April 15 by Abbe Malu Malu (President of the Independent Electoral Commission), in which he outlined progress on electoral preparations, including the launch of a public education campaign (septel), Ambassador reiterated to President Kabila our ongoing support for the transition as the best -- and indeed only -- route to elections. He stressed that despite its diverse membership, the CIAT likewise is completely unified on the need to finish the transition as provided for by the Sun City Accords, through the holding of free and fair democratic elections. Kabila acknowledged the point, but noted that he wished the CIAT were more active, and clearer in its pronouncements. The Ambassador noted the difficulty of getting a multilateral body to be active, but did raise the possibility of a visit by at least some UNSC members in May as an indication of the level of interest by CIAT members in ensuring electoral success.

2. (C) The Ambassador noted that we are concerned about what appears to be active efforts by some political elements not party to the transition (note: particularly the UDPS, end note) to foment social unrest by June 30 in an effort to force a premature end to the transition. He emphasized that we have a responsibility to American citizens to try to ensure their safety and provide them the best possible advice on what to do. Kabila said that he does not believe there will be large-scale problems in June, in large part because the government already is taking "measures" to respond. He pointed to the launch (possibly as soon as the week of April 18) of a major communications strategy to educate the population about what already has been done to prepare for elections, and what remains to be done. This outreach, which he said would be in coordination with Malu Malu's Independent Electoral Commission, will involve "most" government officials, including himself. He will address a joint Senate-National Assembly meeting May 17 (following the introduction of the formal request for a six-month extension of the transition to enable elections to take place). He expressed confidence that the Assembly will complete debate on the constitution this month, as scheduled, allowing all other electoral preparations to fall into place.

3. (C) Returning more directly to the possible problem of security in June, Kabila said that the government will take all necessary security measures to ensure that large-scale problems do not occur. He also reminded the Ambassador that "Kinshasa is not the country," implying that despite the relatively shrill rhetoric from the disaffected currently taking place in Kinshasa, the rest of the DRC would not be as subject to disturbances. He said he had met recently with some members of PALU (one of the most aggressive "opposition" elements currently promoting an end to the transition), and said dismissively that they are not even unified themselves. The Ambassador pointed out that the UDPS, however, has a much larger following, is present in many places other than Kinshasa, such as the Kasais, and is much more unified.

4. (U) Kabila asked whether it was true that UDPS leader Etienne Tshishekedi had been officially invited to visit Washington. The Ambassador said there had been no invitation and that a US visit seems to be just a rumor as Tshishekedi's advisor, Mukendi, had told us April 14 that no visit is planned. (Comment: UDPS supporters had been putting together a visit with appointments requested in Washington and New York, despite Mukendi's denials, as several officials in the Department and elsewhere had been contacted. The suggested visit may have been canceled because Tshishekedi was not being received at what he considered a sufficiently high level. Alternatively, it may have been that UDPS supporters had been working on the visit without Tshishekedi's full approval. End Comment.) Kabila said he was pleased, in this instance, to have been deceived by a rumor, and added that "one man" cannot be allowed to set the country back forty years.

5. (C) Kabila asked if the Ambassador had heard anything about President Kagame's visit to Washington and April 15 meeting with President Bush. Ambassador replied that he had

not yet received a read-out on the meeting, while noting that the Congolese need to follow-up quickly on their initial success with the FDLR announcement in Rome. The decision to disarm needs to be implemented, he stressed, noting as well that it will be helpful if Kigali makes this process as easy as possible.

16. (C) In closing, President Kabila raised the question of HIPC debt relief for the DRC. The Ambassador responded that he is hopeful that we soon will receive sufficient funding to enable interest payments to be paid for the next two years, and hopes that we therefore will quickly be able to offer a rescheduling agreement.

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